



Interview Summary: Mayor Drew Dilkens, City of Windsor

Background

Mayor Drew Dilkens has been the Mayor of the City of Windsor and Chair of the Windsor Police Services Board (**WPSB**) since his election in 2014. Prior to being elected as Mayor, Mayor Dilkens had been City Councillor since 2006.

During the Freedom Convoy-related demonstrations and ensuing blockade of the Ambassador Bridge (the **Bridge**), Mayor Dilkens was a member of the Community Control Group (the **CCG**), a group of officials that has an oversight role over the municipality's response in an emergency, pursuant to the City's Emergency Response Plan and Ontario Regulation 380/04. He also had discussions regarding the demonstrations with provincial and federal politicians and with American officials.

In his capacity as Mayor of Windsor, Mayor Dilkens was regularly briefed by Chief Pamela Mizuno and Deputy Chief Jason Bellaire of the Windsor Police Service (**WPS**) and facilitated communications between City Council and WPS. He also helped Chief Mizuno in securing additional resources from the Ontario and federal governments.

Mayor Dilkens was interviewed by Natalia Rodriguez, Jean-Simon Schoenholz, and Guillaume Sirois on September 2, 2022. Questions about this interview summary should be directed to Jean-Simon Schoenholz.

Arrival of the Freedom Convoy and Pre-Blockade Planning

General

The City did not play a role in responding to "slow roll" protests on January 23 and 29, 2022. Mayor Dilkens explained that access to the Bridge was maintained and, as traffic was moving, these "slow roll" demonstrations did not set off any alarm bells at the City or require City involvement in the response.

Protesters did not request a City permit for "slow roll" demonstrations or any other related demonstrations.

Ambassador Bridge

On February 4, 2022, Chief Mizuno informed Mayor Dilkens by phone of the possibility that slow roll protesters may attempt to block traffic at the Bridge. Chief Mizuno informed Mayor Dilkens that police were monitoring the slow roll demonstrations and gathering intelligence. Mayor Dilkens was under the impression that the police had the situation under control. Police did not indicate to the Mayor that they did not have the resources to manage the situation. On the same day, Mayor Dilkens informed Minister Mendicino of



the risk of a blockade via text message.¹ Mayor Dilkens does not know if the owners of the Bridge were informed of this risk.

According to Mayor Dilkens, the City did not consider blocking access to the Bridge in anticipation of a potential blockade. Huron Church Road has multiple access points, including driveways, plaza access, etc. Even if police could block some access points, the City would not have had the resources to block all access points. Such an effort, even if feasible, would cause significant disruption to residents and businesses.

Tunnel

Mayor Dilkens made sure that there was a transit bus available for health care workers to cross the border via the Detroit-Windsor Tunnel (the **Tunnel**) in the event the Tunnel was blocked.² Mayor Dilkens saw this as a priority because he was advised that some hospitals in Detroit would have had to shut down if Canadian health care workers were prevented from crossing the border.

Mayor Dilkens discussed plans to prevent protesters from blocking the Tunnel with police. It was well understood that it was not practically possible to do so while maintaining Tunnel access for the general public.

First Day of the Blockade

Mayor Dilkens learned of the blockade when it started on February 7, 2022. A convoy-specific CCG meeting was held that morning at 9:30am.³ Chief Mizuno attended the meeting and explained that WPS was monitoring the situation. Within an hour of the CCG meeting, the largest employer in the Windsor-Essex region (Stellantis) called Mayor Dilkens to enquire into the situation at the Bridge.

Mayor Dilkens recalls communicating with Chief Mizuno many times on that day. Mayor Dilkens understood that WPS was negotiating with protesters that day to bring the blockade to an end. His understanding is that these discussions were not fruitful as there was no defined leadership and the temperature on the ground increased very quickly. Mayor Dilkens understood that some protesters were expressing that they were willing to die for their cause. Chief Mizuno explained to the Mayor that, as a result, the WPS had to adapt its response.

¹ WIN00001985

² WIN00000069

³ See CCG meeting minutes of February 7, 2022 (WIN00002204).



Mayor Dilkens does not remember the WPS ever indicating that the protesters' freedom of movement constrained their options in preventing or responding to the blockade.⁴

Risks of Escalation and Communications with Protesters

During the February 8, 2022 WPSB special, in-camera meeting, Deputy Chief Bellaire explained that WPS strategy was “deep in diplomacy” and based on negotiation, mediation, and de-escalation tactics. Mayor Dilkens understood the police focussed on de-escalation as police did not want to become a “flashpoint” and attract more protesters.

Deputy Chief Bellaire informed Mayor Dilkens that the WPS was communicating every day with the protesters. The Deputy Chief expressed to Mayor Dilkens that it was difficult to have productive discussions with protesters as they lacked a clear leadership structure.

Mayor Dilkens received numerous threats against him and his family during the demonstrations. His home address was published online. This led to the WPS posting marked police cars in front of his home. Protesters were encouraged to protest outside Councillor Fabio Costante's private law office because of his support for the injunction.

The Mayor had no direct communications with protesters and was not involved in negotiations with them.

The WPSB and Calls for Additional Resources

Pre-blockade

The WPSB is a civilian body that oversees the WPS.⁵ Mayor Dilkens was not aware of whether the WPS has a specific policy on managing protests prior to the blockade. The WPSB does not have a policy regarding major events.

The WPS does not have its own Public Order Unit (**POU**) or Police Liaison Team (**PLT**). At no time before or during the protests was this fact raised as a concern with the WPSB. WPSB and WPS entered into an agreement with London Police Service (**LPS**) whereby the WPS used the POU of the LPS.

Mayor Dilkens noted that there is a cost to maintaining and training POUs, and POUs may not be used often in Windsor. The WPSB did not raise WPS investing in its own POU prior to the blockade.

⁴ WIN00002204

⁵ *Police Services Act* R.S.O. 1990, c. P.15, at ss. 31(2).



Mayor Dilkens does not recall when City Council and WPSB were first formally informed of the risk of a blockade. Mayor Dilkens engaged in individual informal communications with Councilors in the days before the blockade started on February 7, 2022.

Prior to the Blockade, Chief Mizuno did not specifically advise Mayor Dilkens that the WPS would not have sufficient human resources in the event of a blockade. The Chief may have raised some hypothetical scenarios to the effect that, if the demonstrations happening in Ottawa were to happen in Windsor, blocking both the Bridge and the Tunnel, the WPS would be quickly overwhelmed. However, she did not raise any specific concern with respect to the WPS' readiness.

Mayor Dilkens was unaware of any refusal by the OPP or the RCMP to provide additional human resources before the blockade. He was not involved in any resource requests prior to the blockade.

Request for Additional Resources

On or around February 7, 2022, Mayor Dilkens had separate calls with Minister Mendicino and Sylvia Jones, the Solicitor General of Ontario. They each asked him what Windsor needed to respond to the blockade. Mayor Dilkens also had a conversation with Chief Mizuno on or around February 7, 2022. She advised that the WPS needed an additional 100 officers. Mayor Dilkens does not know how Chief Mizuno reached the number of 100 additional officers and he was not provided with a plan on how these officers would be used.

Mayor Dilkens communicated this request for 100 officers to Minister Mendicino and Sylvia Jones. The Mayor's office was advised that the request would need to be made formally in writing.

On February 9, 2022, Chief Mizuno sent a letter to the Ontario government and another one to the federal government, each formally requesting 100 officers.⁶ It was unclear to Mayor Dilkens whether WPS needed a total of 100 or 200 officers. Ultimately, Mayor Dilkens understands that WPS received somewhere between 500 to 600 officers, who started to arrive on or around February 9, 2022. The reasons for the number of officers and timing of arrival is a matter more appropriately addressed by the WPS. Mayor Dilkens does not recall any specific conversation with Minister Mendicino comparing Ottawa's and Windsor's requests for additional resources. Mayor Dilkens was aware of the importance of the Bridge and the impact of the blockade on the Canadian and US economy.

On February 8, 2022, the WPSB held a special *in-camera* meeting to discuss the Ambassador Bridge blockade.⁷ Mayor Dilkens called this meeting, the first of the WPSB

⁶ WIN00001648 and WIN00001649.

⁷ WIN00002174.



relating to the protests. Chief Mizuno shared all the information that she felt comfortable sharing and she responded to WPSB members' questions.

During that meeting, Chief Mizuno mentioned that the WPS requested assistance from Chatham Police and Lasalle Police. Mayor Dilkens does not remember the specifics of the assistance provided by these two police services, but he remembers that the London Police Service deployed a POU to Windsor. Mayor Dilkens, as Chair of the WPSB, signed a contract between WPS, WPSB, the London Police Service, and London Police Services board on behalf of the WPSB whereby the WPS used the POU of the London Police Service.

Mayor Dilkens was aware that police officers were being requested by the City of Ottawa at the same time and that officers were also needed in other parts of Canada.

Mayor Dilkens is not aware of any other requests for additional officers from the WPS or the City.

Towing Resources

On or before February 9, 2022, the Canada Border Services Agency (**CBSA**) offered tow trucks to WPS.⁸ Mayor Dilkens understood that WPS did not accept the CBSA's offer at that time as they did not yet have the resources to move forward with enforcement action.

February 11, 2022 WPSB Meeting

On February 11, 2022 the Mayor called a Special WPSB *in-camera* Meeting to update the WPSB on the situation.⁹ During the meeting, Chief Mizuno said that the provincial declaration of emergency was helpful and gave law enforcement additional tools in terms of future protests.

WPSB's Role

Mayor Dilkens summarized the WPSB's role during the blockade as making sure that adequate and effective policing is provided by the WPS. This included oversight of the Chief and the WPS budget, and supporting the Chief. The WPSB did not adopt any resolution to support a request for additional resources.

Mayor Dilkens, as Mayor of Windsor, was having discussions and escalated Chief Mizuno's request for additional resources with the upper levels of government.

⁸ WIN00001978

⁹ WIN00002173.



The WPSB did not enact any policies relating to the “slow roll” protests or the blockade, either when these were active or since that time. The WPSB did not issue any directions to the Chief of Police with respect to the “slow roll” protests or the blockade. According to Mayor Dilkens, the WPSB’s role during the blockade was to support the WSP and to ensure it had everything it needed to manage and end the blockade.

Communications with Governments

Federal Government

Mayor Dilkens decided to text Minister Mendicino about the risk of a blockade on February 4, 2022, as mentioned above, to put the information about the potential return of the convoy on the Minister of Public Safety’s radar. Mayor Dilkens engaged in text exchanges with the Minister throughout the relevant time period.¹⁰ Note that Mayor Dilkens had personal connections with Minister Mendicino that predated the events of February 2022.

On February 9, 2022, Mayor Dilkens texted Minister Mendicino “I told Premier [Ford] I spoke with you and he asked for your number ... I get the sense he is going to follow Alberta and Saskatchewan”.¹¹ Mayor Dilkens was referring to Alberta and Saskatchewan’s then-recent signals of their intentions to soon remove most remaining COVID-19 restrictions. Mayor Dilkens does not remember why Premier Ford wanted to speak with Minister Mendicino.

On February 10, 2022, Mayor Dilkens had a short phone conversation with the Prime Minister. Mayor Dilkens gave the Prime Minister a summary of the situation in Windsor. The Prime Minister was supportive and mentioned working with the U.S. on the possibility of enhanced tools at the border. There were no offers of or requests for assistance.

Mayor Dilkens learned through an online story from a credible news outlet that the federal government was contemplating invoking the *Emergencies Act* just prior to its invocation. On February 14, 2022, Mayor Dilkens inquired with Minister Mendicino if the federal government was taking legislative action related to the *Emergencies Act*. Minister Mendicino texted Mayor Dilkens: “To the extent you can be supportive of any additional authorities that gets Windsor the resources needed to keep the Bridge open, people safe, that would be great”.¹²

Mayor Dilkens understood that invocation of the *Emergencies Act* would garner a certain amount of criticism politically, and those living through situations that led the federal

¹⁰ WIN00002295

¹¹ WIN00001973

¹² WIN00001974 and WIN00001977



government to consider its invocation may be better situated to speak about the benefits provided by the Act.

After the blockade was cleared on February 14, 2022, Mayor Dilkens' understanding is that police officers started leaving Windsor to support Ottawa. Minister Mendicino was aware (and communicated his concern with Mayor Dilkens) that after Ottawa would be cleared, there was a risk of a protester resurgence in Windsor.¹³

Government of Ontario

On February 9, 2022, Mayor Dilkens had a phone conversation with the Office of the Solicitor General of Ontario and another one with Premier Ford. Mayor Dilkens does not remember the exact content of these conversations, but he likely would have raised the request for 100 officers that was made on that same day by Chief Mizuno. There was no mention of or discussions about emergency declarations at the federal or provincial levels.

On February 11, 2022, Mayor Dilkens thanked Premier Ford for taking action in reference to the provincial declaration of emergency. The Mayor did not ask for the provincial emergency.¹⁴ In Mayor Dilkens' opinion, the provincial declaration was meaningful because it provided additional tools to law enforcement and sent a strong message to the protesters on the ground such as the possibility to suspend the protesters' commercial licenses. When Premier Ford learned on February 13, 2022 that police had full control of the Bridge area, he noted "Good to hear we need the Bridge open asap. I have every major company all over me." Mayor Dilkens understood that Premier Ford was referring to the major companies in Windsor including not only the automotive industry, but also the agriculture industry and the numerous greenhouses nearby that produce perishable goods.

Mayor Dilkens never discussed the federal *Emergencies Act* with any federal or provincial officials prior to its invocation.

Other Cities

Mayor Dilkens did not have any direct discussions with mayors of neighbouring Canadian cities or towns regarding the demonstrations. He did have one phone conversation with the Mayor of Detroit, but Mayor Dilkens did not make any requests and there were no offers of assistance.

¹³ WIN00002212

¹⁴ WIN00001583



United States

Mayor Dilkens had at least two phone calls with the head of U.S. Customs and Border Protection. The first, on February 10, 2022, was to let him know what was happening on the ground. The second call was within few hours of the opening of the border crossing on February 14, 2022, to warn U.S. Customs of the incoming flow of traffic.

The Governor of Michigan offered to help secure heavy tow trucks.¹⁵ It is Mayor Dilkens' understanding that nothing came out of this offer. He understands that this offer was a political gesture and that it was not, in fact, actionable. This was the Governor's only offer of assistance.

Coordination with Law Enforcement

The response to the demonstrations was led by the police. The WPS briefed the WPSB on the plan to end the blockade on a high level, such that they were satisfied that Chief Mizuno was on top of the situation and that the blockade was being dealt with appropriately by the police. The WPSB was free to ask for any details, and the Chief provided the details requested.

Once the injunction was obtained (discussed below), the WPS communicated to Mayor Dilkens that they had sufficient resources to enforce the injunction. The implementation of the plan took a little longer to execute because of the need for approval of the plan by the OPP and RCMP.

Mayor Dilkens expected, at the time, that the operation to end the blockade would have cleared access to the Bridge on February 12, 2022. However, a local pastor encouraged a congregation to attend the blockade. People attended the area with their families and children. Mayor Dilkens understands that the police waited for the children to leave before proceeding.¹⁶

Injunction

On or about February 9, 2022, Mayor Dilkens and the Mayor's Office sought legal advice and decided to pursue an injunction. Mayor Dilkens was concerned about the impact of the blockade on businesses and noted that some employers were forced to stop operations. In Mayor Dilkens' view, seeking an injunction was a positive action the City could take to protect the public interest and signal to residents that the City was taking

¹⁵ WIN00002063

¹⁶ WIN00000925, p. 109.



steps to end the blockade. If the City obtained the injunction, this would be another tool for law enforcement.

City Council met on February 10, 2022 and voted in favor of seeking an injunction.

On February 10, 2022, Mayor Dilkens spoke with Chief Mizuno and Deputy Chief Bellaire to inform them that the City was going to join the Automotive Parts Manufacturers' Association (**APMA**) in seeking an injunction. The APMA and the City appeared in court on that day and again the next day, February 11, 2022. The injunction was granted, effective 7pm on February 11, 2022.

End of the Blockade

The Bridge reopened on February 14 at around 12:20 AM. Mayor Dilkens explained that there remained, for some time, a heightened concern about with respect to possible attempts by protesters to re-establish the blockade. The resources needed to keep the Bridge protected from this risk were immense, and the City and WPS did not have the resources to do so by themselves.

In Mayor Dilkens' view, the invocation of the *Emergencies Act* may have been helpful in sending a signal to protesters that the Federal Government was taking the blockade seriously and to discourage the re-establishment of a second blockade, which ultimately did not occur.

Mayor Dilkens acknowledges that the Ambassador Bridge blockade ended prior to the invocation of the *Emergencies Act*. He is not aware that WPS relied on any of the emergency measures established by the federal government.

Unity of the City Council

Through his Chief of Staff, Andrew Teliszewsky, the Mayor asked that Councillors refrain from entertaining media requests. The Mayor was being briefed for key messages that focus on de-escalation and, as spokesperson for the City, the Mayor would provide an informed and unified message regarding the demonstrations.¹⁷ Mayor Dilkens noted that all City Councillors cooperated and amplified the City communications. The Councillors had a shared understanding of the Bridge's importance.

The Councillors stayed informed of developments via updates from the Mayor's Chief of Staff, press conferences organized by the Mayor and Chief Mizuno, and Council meetings. City Council had confidence in the Chief's ability to manage the situation.

¹⁷ WIN00000152



City Declaration of Emergency

The City of Windsor declared a municipal emergency on February 14, 2022. According to Mayor Dilkens, this provided him with the power to take decisions that would typically need to be approved by City Council, such as redirecting a transit line, for instance. The declaration provided the Mayor with greater flexibility to address the aftermath and prevent a resurgence of the blockade. Mayor Dilkens also mentioned that it sent a signal to upper levels of government that the City and its businesses needed support.

As to why he only declared the emergency after the Bridge had already reopened, the Mayor explained that the jersey barriers that were placed along Huron Church Road to protect access to the Bridge significantly impacted over 200 businesses along that road. While the declaration was made for practical purposes, it also sent the signal that businesses were being negatively impacted.

On February 24, 2022, Mayor Dilkens terminated the municipal emergency, because the City was in a stable position. WPS restricted and monitored the traffic in the area of Huron Church Road until mid-March to prevent a resurgence in protest activity.

Effects and Costs

The Ambassador Bridge is the busiest international border crossing in North America in terms of trade volume. There are two entrances to the Bridge: the primary entrance from Huron Church Road and a secondary entrance from Wyandotte Street West. Huron Church Road is a municipal road which connects to Ontario Highway 401. Mayor Dilkens explained that schools, multiple businesses, and residential buildings are located along Huron Church Road. Local businesses were among the most severely impacted by the blockade and the traffic barriers that remained afterwards.

Mayor Dilkens does not precisely know the economic impact on local businesses, although he knows it was significant. The Federal Government made approximately \$2 million available to assist in covering business losses. The province did not provide any financial assistance specifically related to the blockade.

Mayor Dilkens added that most if not all municipal services in the vicinity of the Bridge and Huron Church Road were impacted by the blockade and subsequent preventive measures. Because Huron Church Road bifurcates the City, placing barriers along this street prevented residents from accessing businesses and services such as grocery stores and libraries.

The City estimates approximately \$5.3 million in direct costs to the City, including extra policing costs. The City has asked the Ontario and federal governments for financial support, but has not been reimbursed to date.